



“Smoke Testing”

Frequently Asked Questions...

Why do we need to perform Smoke Testing and what is it?

The City has seen a steady increase in the amount of “clear water”, water not needing treatment (such as rainwater and sump pumps flows), flowing into the sanitary sewer collection system. High volumes can overwhelm the existing system and cause basement backups, sanitary sewer overflows, quality of treatment concerns at the utility and increased operational costs. Smoke testing is a means to locate areas where this “clear water” is making its way into the system. A liquid smoke product is vaporized and forced into a length of sanitary sewer pipe that has been temporarily plugged on either end. Air pressure carrying the smoke product will flow into all areas that are hooked into the sanitary system. If your home is plumbed correctly only the vent stack should show signs of smoke.

How will the smoke affect me and my pets?

If you have a respiratory or other health condition it may be wise to move outdoors during the period when smoke testing is occurring. This should be no longer than 20 minutes. If there is any other special circumstances please contact Jeff Gwaltney at the Wastewater Utility @ 262-473-5920. If you will be gone for the day and pets are home it is a good idea to leave some windows open slightly and run a fan if desired.

What should residents do prior to smoke testing?

If you have any unused or lightly used drains in your home it is wise to pour approximately 1 gallon of water down all of those fixtures. This will fill up the drain trap which will prevent smoke from coming into your home. An example of this would be an old wash sink or basement floor drain.

What should I do if I notice smoke in my house?

Please make contact with one of the City or Engineering Staff in the area to report your findings. After this it is recommended that you contact a licensed plumber to repair any deficiencies found during smoke testing. If smoke is finding its way into your home during this inspection this means that sewer gas is also able to make its way into your home as well.

Do I need to be home during smoke testing?

No, you do not need to be home but you may want to leave a kitchen and bath window slightly ajar to increase ventilation if you are concerned about potential issues in your home.

Who has been given notice of the testing?

Wastewater Utility staff has discussed the upcoming testing with Police and Fire Department officials. In addition, all large service providers such as restaurants, assisted living complexes, grocery stores and department stores have been notified in person. Owners of large apartments and multiplex structures will be receiving notification via mail. Residential homeowners will be getting door hanger notifications a day or two prior to testing in your area.

Where will smoke testing be conducted?

A map has been created to show residents and business owners the area that will be completed. Areas in red will be completed in the fall of 2013. This map is available on the City website front page at www.whitewater-wi.gov.

What if I have other questions?

Please direct calls to the Wastewater Utility at 262-473-5920. Staff is available M-F from 7am to 3:30pm.